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ABSTRACT

The School-Home Contact Program was designed to send paraprofessional workers who are familiar with the community into the homes of students who show serious problems in attendance, adjustment, or achievement. The general objective of the program is to establish rapport between the school and the parents, anticipating that better communication will prevent problem students from dropping out of school. Family assistants contact parents of students referred to them by school personnel. They communicate to the parents the nature of the problem, kinds of assistance available from the school, and what they may do to help their children. They also arrange appointments with professional school staff when indicated. The selection and screening of the staff is conducted by the individual high school administrations. The family assistants are recruited from the target neighborhoods and serve 20 schools throughout the city. They work four and one half hours a day, and when home visits are not possible in the daytime, evening or weekend visits are arranged and made. There are 85 family assistants included in this study. The major conclusion of this study which also included over 1,000 student subjects, 180 parents, 48 high school professional staff, and two supervisors, is that the School-Home Contact Program has been associated with lower absenteeism, tardiness, and school dropping out. (Author/JM)

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FINAL REPORT

OF THE EVALUATION OF

THE

1971-1972

SCHOOL-HOME CONTACT PROGRAM

An Evaluation of a New York City school district educational project funded by the "New York State Urban Education Program" enacted at the 1969 legislative session of the New York State Legislature for the purpose of "meeting special educational needs associated with poverty" (Chapter 685, Section 9, subdivision 11, laws of 1969, performed under contract with the Board of Education of the City of New York for the 1971-72 school year.)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SCHOOL-HOME CONTACT PROGRAM

Program Description

The School-Home Contact Program was designed to send paraprofessional workers who are familiar with the community into the homes of students who show serious problems in attendance, adjustment, or achievement. The general objective of the program is to establish rapport between the school and the parents, anticipating that better communication will prevent problem students from dropping out of school.

The School-Home Contact Program evaluated in this study includes 85 family assistants in the following 18 (*) high schools:

1. Central Commercial High School
2. Haaren High School
3. Julia Richman High School
4. Samuel Gompers Vocational and Technical High School
5. James Monroe High School
6. Walton High School
7. East New York Vocational and Technical High School
8. Boys' High School
9. Canarsie High School
10. Prospect Heights High School
11. Thomas Jefferson High School
12. Franklin Lane High School
13. William H. Maxwell Vocational High School
14. Forest Hills High School
15. Francis Lewis High School
16. John Bowne High School
17. Martin Van Buren High School
18. George Wingate High School

Family assistants contact parents of students referred to them by school personnel. They communicate to the parents the nature of the problem, kinds of assistance available from the school, and what they may do to help their children. They also arrange appointments with professional school staff when indicated.

Family assistants are recruited from the target neighborhoods and serve 20 schools throughout the city.* They work 4½ hours a day; when home visits are not possible in the daytime, evening or weekend visits or phone calls may be made.

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*Two high schools, Benjamin Franklin High School and Eastern District were added to the program too late in the school year to be included in this study.

Program Objectives

1. To reduce class cutting and tardiness.

2. To reduce dropouts from school.

3. To improve school achievement.

4. To improve attitudes towards school.

5. To create rapport between parents of problem students and family assistants.

6. To provide parents with information they can use to help their children.

7. To provide needed information on family background of the students for the school staff.

Evaluation Objectives and Procedures

1. To determine whether students referred to family assistants changed in absenteeism, tardiness, English achievement and proportion of classes failed to approximate the norms of all other students. Data on a stratified sample of 540 students referred to the program and a stratified sample of 540 norm group students, stratified by high school, were compared using *t* tests for differences and descriptive statistics.

2. To assess whether the program helped to reduce dropouts. In addition to inferential findings based on absenteeism and achievement, records were screened for reasons cited for discharge.

3. To assess, on the basis of school performance and interviews with 30 students and 180 parents, whether the program developed more positive attitudes toward school.

4. To assess whether rapport was established between parents and family assistants. There were 180 parents interviewed to the extent of family contact by family assistants and to assess the attitudes of parents toward the schools and family assistants.

5. To assess whether the involved professional staff of the high schools (80% or more) felt that they were receiving valued information through the program. Forty-eight professional staff and 71 family assistants were interviewed for their views of the weaknesses and strengths of the program and to solicit recommendations.

6. To assess whether the program was implemented according to plan, to determine the costs per pupil, and to make an assessment of cost effectiveness. School records, on-site visits and interviews provided the data from which inferences as to cost effectiveness were made.

Chapter I

SCHOOL-HOME CONTACT PROGRAM

Program Description

The School-Home Contact Program was designed to send paraprofessional workers who are familiar with the community into the homes of students who show serious problems in attendance, adjustment, or achievement. The general objective of the program is to establish rapport between the school and the parents, in hopes that better communication will prevent problem students from dropping out of school.

The selection and screening of the staff is conducted by the individual high school administrations. The School-Home Contact Program varies in practice from school to school. In some schools, the family assistant contacts parents once and sets up appointments with the professional school staff, e.g. counselors, principals, and teachers. In other schools, the family assistant works with the parents more extensively. Visitations are made by paraprofessionals to teach the parents what to expect from the school and what to do to help their children adjust and achieve. The family assistants are recruited from the target neighborhoods and serve 20 schools* throughout the city. They work four and one half hours a day, and when home visits are not possible in the daytime, evening or weekend visits are arranged and made. There are 85 family assistants included in this study.

*Two high schools, Benjamin Franklin High School and Eastern District were added to the program too late in the school year to be included in this study.

The School-Home Contact Program evaluated in this study included Family Assistants in the following high schools:

1. Central Commercial High School
2. Haaren High School
3. Julia Richman High School
4. Samuel Gompers Vocational & Technical High School
5. James Monroe High School
6. Walton High School
7. East New York Vocational & Technical High School
8. Boys' High School
9. Canarsie High School
10. Prospect Heights High School
11. Thomas Jefferson High School
12. Franklin Lane High School
13. William H. Maxwell Vocational High School
14. Forest Hills High School
15. Francis Lewis High School
16. John Bowne High School
17. Martin Van Buren High School
18. George Wingate High School

It is anticipated that between the school and the parents better communication will produce the following results.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. To reduce class cutting and tardiness.

2. To reduce dropouts from school.

3. To improve school achievement.

4. To improve attitudes towards school.

5. To create rapport between parents of problem students and the family assistant.

6. To provide parents with information they can use to help their children.

7. To provide needed information on family background of the students for the school staff.

Chapter II

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND PROCEDURES

Evaluation Objectives

The first objective was to assess whether students referred to family assistants changed their absenteeism and tardiness rates to approximate the norms for all other students in the schools served.*

The second major evaluation objectives was to assess whether the dropout rate among students referred to family assistants was reduced by the School-Home Contact Program.*

The third major evaluation objective was to assess whether students served by family assistants exhibited changes in English achievement and proportion of classes failed similar to the norms of other students in the schools served.*+

The fourth major evaluation objective was to assess whether students served by family assistants developed more positive attitudes towards school.

The fifth evaluation objectives was to assess whether there was rapport between the parents and the family assistants from the parents' perspective.

The sixth evaluation objective was to assess whether the family assistants provided 80% or more of the school staff (teachers, counselors, and administrators) with information the school staff felt they needed.

The seventh evaluation objective was to present a statement on the strengths and weaknesses of the School-Home Contact Program from the perspectives of family assistants, parents, students, teachers, counselors, and administrators, and to report their recommendations for the program.

The eighth objective was to determine the costs of the program and make an assessment of the cost effectiveness of the program.

The ninth and final general evaluation objective was to make an assessment of whether the program had been implemented according to plan, and to make recommendations concerning the program for the following year.

Subjects Sampled

From the total population of approximately 15,000 clients, a stratified probability sample of 540 high school students (30 students per school, 18 high schools) was drawn. In addition, a norm group from the same schools of 540 students who were described as non-clients of this gprogram.

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* See Appendix E

\+ English was selected as one index of overall achievement since it is typically correlated with other subject areas. However, an overall index of proportions of classes failed or passed was also employed.

were drawn. Data is reported relevant to changes in tardiness, absenteeism, English achievement and proportion of classes failed from the second marking period, Fall Term, 1971 to the end of the second marking period, Spring Term 1972. For each analysis, the number of sample and norm group students ranged from 430 to 500, due to variations in completeness of school records data on each subject or the lack of validly comparable data.

From the total of 18 high schools evaluated, stratified by school, a total of 180 parents were drawn from the lists of parents contacted by family assistants. These lists were provided by the family assistants. These 180 parents were interviewed in person or on the phone by evaluation staff personnel from TLRC in February, March and April of 1972.

In addition, all 18 schools were visited by TLRC evaluation staff twice during the school year to interview 48 school staff and 71 family assistants for their assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of the program, and to solicit recommendations from school personnel for improving the program. Also, two to four students in several schools who had seen a family assistant were interviewed for their perceptions of the program. The project coordinator was contacted twice in person, several times on the phone and by letter.

Analysis Procedures

The primary criteria measures of changes in English achievement, proportion of total classes failed, tardiness and absenteeism during the period of this evaluation were obtained from school records. These criteria data were obtained on probability samples of students who were not clients and who served to provide a normative base for comparison. The basic data came from the second marking period, Fall 1971, the second marking period, Spring 1972, and school records. Proportions of students in each sample group who increased, stayed the same, or decreased in English achievement total classes failed, absenteeism and tardiness were compared. These comparisons were tested at an .10 significance level using "t" tests for differences in proportions with uncorrelated data.

The assessment of the impact of the School-Home Contact Program on student dropout is very difficult, given the fact that many students are carried for long periods of time as truants before being discharged. Another difficulty is imposed by those who transfer to other communities and requests for records have not been received. Therefore it was decided to assess the effects of the program on drop-out rate by using two approaches: examining data on absenteeism reported above and examining school records indicating discharge and reasons for discharge.

The behavioral assessment of student attitudes toward school were assessed by the above procedures. However, additional qualitative data were collected through interviews with the parents and through interviews with students at the high schools (see Appendix B).

Parents' assessment of the extent to which they believe the family assistants provided information which they needed and that the School-Home Contact Program had helped their children was determined by structured interviews (see Appendix C). The parent sample is a stratified sample of 10 parents from each of the 18 high schools for a total sample of 180. In addition, through parent interviews it was possible to assess the extent of contact family assistants had with parents. The criteria for success was set at 70% or more of the parents indicating satisfaction with information provided by family assistants and with help provided their children.

The assessment of the extent to which valued background data was provided to school staff was determined by interviews with school staff during the Fall and Spring terms of the 1971-72 school year (see Appendix A). The program was to be judged a success if 80% or more of the staff indicated satisfaction.

Cost effectiveness was assessed by obtaining per pupil costs based on total costs of the program from school records.

The program coordinator was interviewed three times and asked if there were any discrepancies between the program plan and the program which had been implemented. All program sites were visited 2 or more times by an evaluation staff member to assess first-hand if there were any differences between the proposed program and that which had been implemented. Qualitative reports, materials, and records were examined. Seventy-one family assistants and 48 involved school staff in all 18 schools were interviewed. From all available information the TLRC evaluation staff developed a summary qualitative assessment of whether the program was being implemented according to plan, and made recommendations for future implementation.

Chapter III

FINDINGS

Absenteeism

The findings reported in Table 1 show that students after they or their families are seen by family assistants are similar to other students in percentage who increase or decrease in absenteeism. Considering the fact that high rates of absenteeism initially characterize most of those referred to the family assistants and that such students did not show any significant differences from other students over a four month period during which they were seen by family assistants, one may tentatively infer that the program is positively effecting absenteeism.

Table 1

Percentage Changes in Absenteeism From Fall 1971 to Spring 1972

	Percentage who Changed in Absenteeism		
Absenteeism	Referred to Family Assistant %	Norm Group %	
Increased absenteeism	45%	43%	NS
Decreased absenteeism	47	43	NS
No Change	8	14	
Total N	399	412	

NS No significant differences in proportions (.05 level), *t* test.

Tardiness

The criteria of success for the School-Home Contact program on tardiness was at the rate of tardiness of the school norm group. If the students served by family assistants decreased their tardiness at a rate equal to or greater than the norm group, such findings would be considered in accord with program objectives. The fact that the referral students did better, that they exhibited a better pattern of reducing tardiness than was the norm, clearly supports the view that the program is achieving this objective (see Table 2).

Table 2

Percentages in Tardiness from
Fall 1971 to Spring 1972

	Percentage Who Changed in Class Tardiness		
	Referred to Family Assistant	Norm Group	
	%	%	
Increased tardiness	39%	37%	NS
Decreased tardiness	41	32	*
No Change	20	31	
Total N	434	473	

* Significant difference in proportions (.05 level), t test.
NS = No significant difference in proportions (.05 level), t test.

Dropout Reduction

On the basis of the above reported data, the School-Home Contact Program can be inferred to have a positive effect on the absenteeism and tardiness of students it serves. Absenteeism and tardiness are two features of the potential dropout. Given the positive association of the program with attendance and tardiness rate changes, it may be tentatively inferred that the program is helping to reduce dropout rates. As can be seen in Table 3, it was found on screening school records that 14% of the 540 sample students referred to family assistants during the Fall of 1971 were discharged for reasons other than severe illness, death or transfer. This 14% dropout rate is almost three times the rate for the norm group (5%). However, the fact the students referred to family assistants are very high risk students to begin with, in the sense of their being characterized by excessive records of truancy, absenteeism, tardiness and poor achievement when they are referred, and that 86% are still in school, it is again tentatively inferred that the program is a success in reducing dropout.

Dropout Rates of Students

Dropout Rates		
Norm Group	Students Referred to Family Assistants	
1971-72	1970-71	1971-72
%	%	%
5%	14%*	14%*

* Based on N=540

Changes in English Achievement

The data in Table 4, based on Metropolitan Achievement Tests, also shows that referral students after they or their families were seen by family assistants are similar to the norm group. The program objective of producing patterns of achievement among problem students similar to that of norm group students was accomplished.

Table 4

Percentage Change in Performance in English Class from Fall 1971 to Spring 1972

	Percentages Who Changed on English Achievement Levels (Metropolitan Achievement Tests)		
	Referred to Family Assistant %	Norm Group %	
Increased English Scores	34%	32%	NS
Decreased English Scores	32	33	NS
No Change, English Scores	34	35	NS
Total N	449	470	

NS = No significant difference in proportion (.05 level) t test.

Changes in Proportions of Classes Failed

The findings reported in Table 5 do not provide clear evidence of the positive successes of the program reported above on absenteeism, tardiness and English achievement. Almost paradoxically, students referred to family assistants both decreased and increased their rate of failing classes, as compared to norm group students. In summary, it appears as if the School-Home Contact Program has not achieved its objective of effecting positive changes in rates of class failure to levels approximating school norms.

Table 5

Changes in Proportion of Classes Failed from Fall 1971 to Spring 1972

	Percentage Who Changed in Proportion Classes Failed	
	Referred to Family Assistant %	Norm Group %
Increased	33%	25% *
Decreased	32	23 *
No Change	35	52 *
Total N	469	468

* Significant difference in proportions (.05 level)

Parent Assessments

Similar to last years evaluation study,* a list of referrals whose families had been contacted was obtained from school records. A probability sample of 180 parents, stratified by school was drawn and interviewed by the evaluation staff in the spring of 1972. The data in Table 6 show that 92% of the parents interviewed confirmed that the family assistant had been to see them. During the 1970-71 school year only 73% of the parents interviewed confirmed contact with family assistants. Finally, as shown in Table 6, the number of visits per family assistant were almost doubled from the previous year (1.1 to 2.0).

Table 6

N = 165	Confirmation of Parental Contact by Family Assistants 1970-71* N	%	1971-72 N	%
Parents Confirm Visit of FA	180	77%	180	92%
Average Number of visits per family		1.1		2.0

* Final Report School-Home Contact 1970-71, New York: Teaching and Learning Research Corp., 1971, p. 20.

The data in Table 7 also shows a big increase over last year in the number of parents who indicated:

1. My child gets along better with his teachers and students and is more interested in school.

2. The family assistants keep me well informed about my child's progress and informed about my child's problems

3. The family assistant understands the kind of help my child needs.

Table 7

Parental Assessment: Total Sample

	Yes* %
1. Child gets along better with: teachers	87%
students	86
2. Child more interested in school	87
3. Family assistant keeps me well informed about child's progress	88
4. Family assistant understands the help my child needs.	87
5. Family assistant lets me know when my child has problems	100

* Based on 92% of 180 parents (166 out of 180) who confirmed contact with Family Assistant

Staff Evaluations Based on Interviews and on site Observations

Contact with 48 professional high school staff members and 71 family assistants produced an overwhelming endorsement of the School-Home Contact Program. The following are illustrative comments from the professional staff.

Letter to a Coordinator of High School Programs

Office of the Dean
Jan. 17, 1972

Dear [High School Coordinator of Program]

We, in the Dean's offices appreciate the valuable service you have provided for us in the person of Mr. N_ _ _ _ [a family assistant]. He has enabled us to make home contacts that would otherwise have been impossible.

Sincerely yours,

/Signed by Dean of Girls/

Throughout the school year every visit by a TLRC evaluation staff member was met by such feelings as expressed in the letter above. Additional positive illustrative comments follow:

Comments of an Assistant Principal:

Through the Program, parents of disadvantaged students get the impression that school authorities care about the progress and achievement of their individual children. Also, parents relate better with sympathetic para-professionals who not only notify parents of their children's school record but also point out the many school and community services that are available to help them. The school authorities get to understand some of the difficult family situations that these youngsters have to live with.

Comments of Dean of Boys

The main strength of our program is the caliber of the people involved. I am always amazed at the warmth and intelligence of the people whom we are fortunate to have assigned to us. These fine ladies and gentlemen have been able to meet parents in the home in the many instances where we have been unable to make contact. I have instances of formerly hostile parents who come to school with a completely different attitude.

Comments of Dean of Girls

We can contact parents after all other methods have failed.

Comments of Dean

This program helps me keep in touch with the home. It helps me prevent pupil suspensions, and I am better able to inform parents of their children's activities in school (conduct, attendance, grades, goals, ambitions, etc.) The program also helps elicit parental interest in school.

Comments of Guidance Counselor

As a result of the School-Home Contact Program, increased contact with many parents that were otherwise unavailable was made possible. The greater involvement of parents has resulted in a greater understanding of school goals and programs.

Comments of High School Coordinator

The program builds positive rapport with the community in that it shows parents that "the school" is interested in their children and wants to work with them. It provides a liaison in cases where counselors have not been able to contact the parent because of physical limitations of working inside the school building. It also provides feedback in the form of a picture of the family setting and constellation and this helps the counselor in seeing the child more completely.

Comments of Senior Grade Advisor

The major strengths of the program are:

1. As a liaison for services available within the school which are unknown to parents.
2. To provide parents with information about the school and the curriculum.
3. Interview parents in a comfortable home situation rather than the overpowering school building.
4. Convince student and parent of the schools willingness to help.
5. Help parents to form a plan of action with the guidance personnel.

Comments of Mathematics Teacher

A major strength is the personal contact it affords between school and parent. This seems far more effective than the alternatives of letter or phone call. My own experience is that this procedure was very successful in some instances. In others, not.

Comments of Cutting Coordinator

> The direct contact with parents is invaluable. The Program often provides the only means of alerting parents where a language problem exists or mail is not received.

Out of 48 teachers, administrators, and counselors contacted, only two felt the School-Home Contact Program was of dubious value. Overwhelmingly the school staff supports and desires the continued maintenance of the School-Home Contact Program.

However, such endorsement of the program is not totally unqualified. The following discussion presents in some detail what the staff believes to be the major weaknesses of the program and their recommendations for improving the program.

Weaknesses of Program - One major criteria of the success of the School-Home Contact Program was for 80% or more of the school staff to view the program as being a valuable source of feedback on students. As can be seen in Table 8, contact with 48 school staff members found only 19% to be sufficiently critical of the feedback they received to mention it in response to an open-ended question asking them to cite the major weaknesses of the program. Furthermore, this 19% is made up of a large proportion who merely want to have the time lag between referral and feedback reduced. The TLRC evaluation staff, in over 40 visits to schools, observed that most wanted to increase the efficiency of the feedback process but that general satisfaction, even enthusiasm for the program was based on the opinion that the program was a source of needed information.

The major weaknesses of the program over which there is much consensus among the school staff involve administrative areas, and here the largest number (8) of respondents pointed out the need for more family assistants, which is hardly a criticism. The one single area where there was a large proportion of consensus concerned the training of family assistants. Nearly a third of the professional staff felt the training of the family assistants was not adequate.

There was no other clustering of weaknesses mentioned other than that of the training of family assistants. The fact that there was no high consensus about any major weakness is a very strong indication of the general satisfaction with the program.

Table 8

Professional Staff Assessments of Major Weaknesses of School-Home Contact Program

Responses to open-ended question: What do you feel are the major weaknesses of the School-Home Contact Program?	Frequency of Mention	% of Mention
A. Administrative and Procedural Problems		
1. Too few family assistants, case loads too large	8	
2. Amount reimbursed or procedures for reimbursement for carfare inadequate	4	
3. Too much paper work for family assistants	3	
4. Inadequate telephone facilities	3	
5. Lack of adequate office space for family assistants	2	
6. Program restricted to too few students	2	60%
7. There is a lack of standardized guidelines for family assistants to follow	2	
8. Denial of administrative time allowance	1	
9. Irregular hours of family assistant	1	
10. More administrative time needed	1	
11. Lack of sufficient clerical assistance	1	
12. Time spent on case load is not left up to the family assistants.	1	
B. Contact with Parents		
1. Working parents too difficult to contact during day - need family assistants employed during evening hours	7	
2. Parents sometimes resent being bothered, are suspicious of school or family assistant	7	
3. Family assistants sometimes reluctant to enter certain communities	3	43%
4. Homes are sometimes hazardous to family assistants	2	
5. Parents sometimes over-react and punish students	1	
6. Program in unzoned school makes it difficult to contact parents	1	

Table 8 continued

	Frequency of Mention	% Mention
C. Training of Family Assistants		
1. Training of family assistants is inadequate	14	31%
2. Family assistants are too inexperienced	1	
D. Feedback		
1. Inadequate feedback. Family assistants do not report back to teachers directly.	5	19%
2. Too great a time gap between referral and feedback.	4	
E. Relationship of FA to professional staff and students.		
1. Professional staff not interested or does not understand function of family assistant	2	8%
2. Family assistants not known to student body	1	
3. Expectations for program exceed ability of family assistant	1	
F. Referral and Follow-up		
1. Too dependent on chance	1	8%
2. Teachers not involved sufficiently in referrals	1	
3. Not enough contact with family assistant by referral sources prior to visit	1	
4. Plans for follow-up inadequate	1	
G. Objectives of Program		
1. Emphasis should be on getting parents to school, not visiting in homes	2	8%
2. Produces feelings among some parents that there is no need to meet with other school staff	2	
None	9	19%

Total High School Professional Staff Contacted = 48

The findings presented in Table 9 show only one area where there is strong consensus among the family assistants concerning weaknesses of the program and that concerns insufficient help and time to carry out needed home contacts. As was the case with the professional staff, the family assistants want the program expanded.

About one-fourth (27%) of the family assistants saw themselves as spending too much time on paper work. This is good in that every service occupation that sees a large human need to be served prefers not to spend time on paper work. The number of complaints about the paper work, however, should be a matter of concern. Record keeping and processing procedures should be constantly reviewed for ways of holding paper work to a minimum. Adequate feedback, an objective of the program and follow-up services require good record keeping. Fortunately, only a few (3) family assistants did not see any value in record keeping.

Reimbursement for travel procedures and relationships with other staff received the next largest criticism. About 14% of the family assistants indicated that the method of reimbursement for travel was unfair. Similarly, about 14% indicated unsatisfactory relationships with the school staff. Again, these complaints tended to come from only two or three of the 18 high schools involved. In summary, then, it is concluded that relationships between family assistants and school staff for the School-Home Contact Program is, in general, quite good. The complaints seem to be concentrated in only a few schools.

Table 9

Family Assistants' Assessments of Major Weaknesses of School-Home Contact Program (Total N-71)

Weaknesses: Family Assistants	Frequency of Mention	% Mentioned
1. Insufficient time to carry out major duties/ Difficulty in contacting parents during time allocated/ Need more family assistants/ Lack of follow-up by family assistants/ Insufficient time.	52	73%
2. Too much paper work expected of family assistants/ Most of time consumed filling out daily, monthly and yearly reports.	19	27%
3. System of reimbursement for travel is unfair.	10	14%

Table 9 continued

	Frequency of Mention	% Mentioned
4. The administration of the program fails to provide for satisfactory communication between family assistants and other school personnel; supervision of family assistant is not always offered; coordination is sometimes lacking; teachers are isolated from professional staff; the school officials sometimes do not cooperate, authority is not always clear.	10	14%
5. The program is often concerned only with those beyond help; only emergency cases are referred; earlier contact with parents should be provided.	7	10%
6. The school facilities are inadequate; need more space for parent conferences.	3	4%
7. Teachers and counselors should have more contact with parents.	3	4%
8. The pay for family assistants is too low; morale is lowered.	3	4%
9. The dangerous situations in the neighborhoods impedes the program's effectiveness; no names on mail boxes, locked doors, etc., makes tasks of contacting parents difficult.	3	4%
10. The referral system is inadequate.	3	4%
11. Parents often do not care; parents do not follow through.	3	4%
12. Parents often do not have time to discuss problems.	2	3%
13. More instruction is needed for family assistants.	2	3%
14. Too much time is taken up with "gripes."	2	3%
15. Students have negative attitude toward family assistants.	1	2%
16. There is a lack of interest among people working in program.	1	2%
17. Training days should not be taken out of normal school hours.	1	2%

Table 9 continued

		Frequency of Mention	% Mentioned
18.	There is no law enforcement or punitive system.	1	2%
19.	The family assistants are doing the work of the truant officers.	1	2%
20.	The family assistants do not always have adequate information on students.	1	2%
21.	None.	1	2%

Staff Recommendations - The data in Table 10 shows little consensus in recommendations among school staff for improving the School-Home Contact Program. This is in accord with our previous findings of high satisfaction with the program on the part of professional staff. Only in the area of increasing and providing more adequate training for family assistants was there any appreciable agreement in recommendations. About one-fourth of the professional staff recommended that greater priority be placed on providing assistants with more pre-service training and depend less on on-the-job training.

Table 10

Professional Staff Recommendations for Improving School-Home Contact Program

Responses to open ended question: What, if any recommendations do you have for improving the School-Home Contact Program?	Frequency of Mention	% Mentioned
A. Organization of Program in School		
1. Provide for more coordination of family assistant services, increase supervision, allow time allowance for supervision.	7	
2. Have some family assistants in school at night to phone and make visits in teams.	4	
3. Needs of school differ considerably, flexibility should be permitted the schools in how they use family assistants.	1	31%
4. Reduce uniformity of record keeping and other procedures.	1	
5. Allow more time for family assistant to keep records.	1	
6. Reduce or hold down shifting of family assistant personnel between offices.	1	
B. Carfare - Telephone - Misc.		
1. Increase amount for carfare.	3	
2. Reimburse for carfare more promptly.	3	
3. Provide better telephone facilities at school.	2	
4. Allow use of private cars, reimburse for mileage.	1	27%
5. Simplify carfare forms.	1	
6. Provide home telephone allowance.	1	
7. Provide clerical assistance to family assistants.	1	
8. Provide allotments of stamps and stationery.	1	
C. Training of Family Assistants		
1. More emphasis on pre-training rather than in-service or on-the-job training.	10	27%
2. More training.	2	
3. Emphasize philosophy of school, etc., in training.	1	
D. Contact with Parents		
1. Use T.V. time, newspapers, open letters to parents, block associations, etc.,to better acquaint parents with family assistant services.	4	25%
2. Provide child care services so parents can visit school when necessary - encourage coming to school.	4	

Table 10 continued

	Frequency of Mention	% Mentioned
3. Solicit views of parents on improving program.	1	
4. When counseling of parents is necessary have licensed counselor make visit.	1	
5. Provide family assistant with guidelines and semistructured interview forms.	1	
6. Emphasize use of telephones and coordinate visits to school.	1	
E. School Staff Involvement		
1. Provide through teacher in-service programs, committees, involvement, etc., a better understanding to school staff of family assistants' functions.	4	16%
2. Provide for more direct contact between family assistants and referring staff prior to home visits.	2	
3. Have regular meetings between staff and family assistants to determine and develop program.	2	
F. Referrals, Follow-up and Feedback		
1. Review and develop a better reporting system to those making referrals.	11	8%
2. Report to dean and others immediately after visit.	1	
3. Better follow-up procedures.	1	
G. General		
1. Expand program, hire more family assistants, long term funding of program, simplify record forms.	5	23%
2. Hire more bi-lingual family assistants.	2	
3. Increase time on job from 4½ hours to 6 hours per day.	1	
4. Shift program from the Office of Attendance to Guidance and Supervision.	1	
5. Use volunteers solicited from community as family assistant workers.	1	
6. Emphasize use of program early in school year.	1	
H. No recommendation for improvement	6	12%

Total number contacted = 48

As shown in Table 11, the only areas of common recommendation indicated by the 71 family assistants contacted involved increasing the hours worked to allow for more parent contact, and providing clerical assistance to reduce time spent on record keeping or allow for better record keeping. These recommendations may be interpreted as essentially recommendations for expanding the program.

The finding of little agreement on how the program should be modified is in accord with the general lack of agreement about perceived weaknesses reported in Table 14, and is again supportive of the conclusion that the program is highly regarded by the family assistants.

Table 11

Family Assistants' Recommendations for Improving School-Home Contact Program

Family Assistants Recommendations	Frequency of Mention
A. Contact with Parents and Students	
1. Increase number of hours worked, provide for more time to conduct parent interviews, increase number of contacts with parents.	38
2. Increase number of family assistants to provide faster and better services.	5
3. Teachers and guidance personnel should have more contact with parents.	5
4. Should contact students in school.	4
5. Make follow-up to inform parents of program.	3
6. Should go into the field in pairs and sometimes in threes.	3
7. Night employment should be restored.	2
B. Administration	
1. Allocate more time for completing reports or have clerical assistance.	18
2. Set up definite chain of command/ employ full time coordinator.	4
3. Provide with identification tags.	2
4. When not in field should only do work pertaining to Family Assistant Program.	2
5. More information on each case should be provided prior to visits.	1
6. Family assistants should be given free hand in small problems.	1
7. Obtain signatures of parents contacted.	1
C. Reimbursement and Salary	
1. Should be given bus passes.	8
2. Pay levels should be increased for family assistants.	4
3. Family assistants should be reimbursed for attending college.	1

Table 11 continued

	Frequency of Mention
D. Staff Relationships	
1. Weekly or monthly meetings should be held between family assistants and school staff to discuss problems.	9
2. Family assistants should be incorporated into school as a permanent feature.	2
E. General	
1. Only people with a major interest in program should be hired.	3
2. There should be an intensive training program.	3
3. Review and restructure referral procedures.	3
4. Develop procedures of equality of work load among family assistants.	2
5. Should contact parents of "good" students as well as those with problems.	1
6. Have more bi-lingual teachers.	1
7. Expand to elementary and junior high levels.	1

Total contacted = 71

Evaluation Staff Observations

Coordination of Program - The major weakness of the School-Home Contact Program, as seen by the evaluation staff of TLRC, results from the lack of budgeted funds for a position of "coordinator of family assistants" within each school. In each school, coordination of the program is assigned to already overworked personnel. In some schools assistant principals have the duty of coordinating the assistants, in other schools the counselors, attendance officers, grade advisors, and even family assistants are given responsibilities of coordinating the School-Home Contact Program. It was surprising to the evaluation staff to find that the program had worked so well given these conditions. The suggestion that funds be budgeted for such a position is supported by many of the school administrators, counselors, teachers, and the Board of Education supervisor in charge of the program.

Some of the professional staff also feel that more supervision is needed over the family assistants. However, the evaluation staff of TLRC, on the basis of over 180 parent interviews, examinations of referrals, records and interviews with 48 professional staff and 71 family assistants, believe that the family assistants are doing an outstanding job. They do very well in spite of having limited training and inadequate coordination. It is believed that budgeted coordination services will result in added supervision and even better services. Supervision is needed, however, primarily for coordinating the work of all involved and not to assure that the assistants work.

In several schools, two to four students who had been referred to family assistants were interviewed about their attitudes toward the family assistants. As in last year's study, which gave more attention to this matter, nearly all of the students interviewed indicated satisfaction with the treatment they or their families received from the family assistants. The attitudes of the students toward having the services of family assistants seemed positive with only a couple of

students making negative remarks. Many students indicated that they were more satisfied with school since the intervention of the family workers.

Referrals - An examination of school records and lists of students referred to the School-Home Contact Program indicates that attendance problems are clearly the most common reason for referral. In descending order of magnitude the other reasons for referral were truancy, behavioral/social problems, academic difficulties, lateness to school, medical problems, address verification, and never having attended school. These findings are almost exactly the same as those reported for 1970-71.* It is concluded that students being referred to the School-Home Contact Program continue to be those for whom the program was planned.

Costs of Program - School records indicate that as of January 31, 1972, the total number of pupils served was 6,980 from a student population of 16,200 in 20 high schools. Supervision of the program was paid from tax levy funds of the Board of Education. The 106 family assistants worked on the average of 4½ hours per day for a total of 22½ hours per week. They were paid from State Urban Funds. As of January 31, 1972 the only additional paid supervisory staff was one supervisor in the Bureau of Attendance and her assistant, an attendance teacher. They were assigned to the program for 32½ hours per week and were paid with State Urban Funds.

The total cost of personnel services of the 106 family assistants and two supervisors was estimated at $462,844.00. The per pupil cost of the program was estimated to be $29.00.

Facilities - Some of the same problems such as lack of office space, clerical assistance and telephone services, which were present last year, also characterized the 1971-72 school year. However, it should be noted that these problems were not all the result of school personnel decisions. For example, the New York City telephone strike impeded the installation of telephones and school phones had to be used.

A number of the work difficulties experienced by family assistants appear to be associated with a lack of office space. However, given the current heavy demands placed on educational facilities, it is difficult to recommend an attainable remedy. If coordination services could be budgeted into the program, then some of the clerical demands on family assistants could be reduced. Perhaps the problem of insufficient facilities will become worse. Given the increasing success of the program more and more referrals are likely to be made. With an increase in referrals, space will become even more of a premium.

Major Developments - During the course of the 1971-72 school year, after this evaluation study was commissioned, a number of important changes in the School-Contact Program were observed.

* Ibid, p. 37.

1. The program was given more centralized direction. Overwhelmingly, the school professional staff indicated general support for the efforts of the central office to make the program more effective. Only two staff members of those querried indicated a dislike for the greater centralization of responsibility and planning.

2. The program was expanded to include Eastern High School and Benjamin Franklin High School. Since this was accomplished late in the year no evaluation of subjects in these schools were included in the study. This expansion, however, is in accord with the positive recommendation of last year's evaluation study.*

3. A parent council was set up in each school to help in the development of the School-Home Contact Program. This innovation is in accord with state, federal, and Board of Education policies for greater parental involvement in school affairs. It is likely to have the consequence of making parents and staff more aware of the resources available for overcoming a number of educational problems. If the Board of Education had not already taken the initiative, it would have been a recommendation of this evaluation staff to so involve parents.

4. An allotment of $400.00 was made to provide for phone calls during evening hours in each school. While the amount alloted may turn out to be less than needed, more resources for evening calls was in accord with the views of most professional, evaluation and family assistant staff. Many parents are unavailable during day time hours and can only be contacted at night. Those responsible should be commended for making this change during the school year.

5. A uniform comprehensive training program for all family assistants was in the process of development. On December 13, 1971 the first comprehensive training program was held for family assistants (see Appendix C). On the basis of comments made during interviews the training sessions were valued by family assistants. The only negative comments were that the training sessions were not held early enough in the school year. The School-Home Contact Program was only recently centralized and therefore the lateness of the program is not the fault of the supervisory staff. In fact, given the limited time with the program, the supervisory staff is to be commended for even having a training program by December. As the program becomes more permanent, experienced staff will be present and earlier training sessions should allow the program to be even more successful in achieving its objectives.

Implementation of Program Plans

In summary, the School-Home Contact Program has not only achieved all of its stated objectives except in the one area of proportion of class failures, it has functioned very closely to plans as called for in funding proposals and Board of Education policies regarding the conduct of school programs.

* Final Report, School-Home Contact Program, 1970-71, Function No. 17-04464, New York: Teaching and Learning Research Corp., 1971, p. 37-43

Chapter IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Attainment of Program Objectives

The major conclusions of this study which included over 1,000 student subjects, 180 parents, 71 family assistants, 48 high school professional staff and two supervisors, are that the School-Home Contact Program has been associated with lower absenteeism, tardiness, and school dropout. The program was also associated with:

1. Positive images of the school and program on the part of parents and students. The parents valued the School-Home Contact Program both for themselves and their children. Most students interviewed were satisfied with the treatment they and their families received from the family assistants and indicated that they were also more satisfied with school as a result of the help they have received.

2. Positive patterns of change in performance in English classes. However, the program was not associated with desired reductions in the proportions of classes failed, and it is therefore concluded that the program did not meet all the criteria set for academic success. However, the evaluation staff of TLRC believe that the academic achievement criteria of success set for this program, while fine as an ideal, is not likely to be attained in such a short time as the period of this study.

3. Positive school staff attitudes. The professional school staff valued the program as a source of needed information on students and as a vehicle for making contact with the families of students.

4. Low operating cost. The cost of the program averaged only $29.00 per pupil. Low administrative costs were one reason for the very low cost of the program. Only two supervisors for the Board of Education central office were budgeted to administer the entire program.

In addition it was observed and concluded that the major recommendations of last year's evaluation study were accomplished during the year and that the School-Home Contact Program was being implemented according to plan as set forth in funding proposals and Board of Education policies.

Findings and Conclusions

1. The School-Home Contact Program achieved its objectives in reducing absenteeism, tardiness and school dropout.

2. The students referred to family assistants developed patterns of achievement comparable to school norms in English but did not reduce in the proportions of classes they failed to approximate school norms. This data does not support the view that the program is achieving the criteria achievement objectives.

3. The program has generally resulted in positive attitudes on the part of parents and students toward family assistants and school. The parents valued the program both for themselves and their children. The students when interviewed tended to indicate satisfaction with the treatment afforded them and their families by the family assistants.

4. The program is highly valued by school administrators and their professional staff as a source of needed information and as a useful means for making contact with parents.

5. The program was being operated at a very low cost. The costs per pupil were only $29.00.

6. The implementation of the program was observed and concluded to be in accord with plans as set forth in funding proposals and Board of Education policies.

Recommendations

1. The central and high school administration should continue the reviewing of record keeping and processing to hold the time lag between referral and feedback to a minimum. It is recommended that consideration be given to expanding the budget to include added supervisory and coordination services in all high schools. This should help to reduce the time lag between referral and feedback considerably.

2. The central and high school administration should continue their efforts to make sure that those who make referrals receive feedback on outcomes as soon as possible. However, it should be noted that the majority of complaints about the referral system and feedback came from only a few schools. In other words, the referral and feedback system in most schools operated without much complaint. This evaluation study was contracted to assess the program in general and not to assess particular schools or persons. As a consequence, recommendations are not made for specific schools or individuals. We recommend that further evaluation studies be contracted to provide comparative findings and make specific recommendations regarding particular school programs. In the meantime, the central administration and high schools should continue to be especially sensitive to the occurence of complaints about feedback.

3. The program should provide for more pre-service and early in-service training of family assistants than was the case this year and not depend so heavily upon on-the-job training. It is clear that many school staff would like to "...have a strong training program which explains exactly what the family worker should do, what their job entails, and the limitations imposed by their skills and training in dealing with families." At the time of the writing of this report it is the understanding of the evaluation staff that plans for recycling the program for 1972-73 are in effect. In addition the program was just reorganized this year and it would have been impossible for Board of Education personnel to have begun training activities earlier. In fact, they are to be complimented for the efficiency with which reorganization and new training programs were offered.

4. More meetings should be scheduled involving coordinators and family assistants to share ideas.

5. Plans should be developed in each school where not already in effect, to involve the family assistants in meetings with the professional staff. There are many faculty who do not yet adequately utilize the services of family assistants. In addition to helping staff members develop a more accurate view of the program, such activities may help the family assistants to feel more a part of the school staff.

In summary, the general recommendation of the TLRC evaluation staff is that the School-Home Contact Program should be expanded at every level. In addition to expanding the program to other schools, priority should be given to finding the added resources to budget for the services of a professional staff member in each school to be responsible for the coordination and supervision of family assistant services. At the very minimum the School-Home Contact Program deserves to be refunded.

APPENDIX A

SCHOOL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Name_____

Position_____School_____

1. In your opinion, what do you believe to be the major strengths of the School-Home Contact Program?

2. In your opinion, what do you believe to be the major weaknesses of the School-Home Contact Program?

3. What, if any,recommendations do you have for improving the School-Home Contact Program?

Interviewer's Name_____
Interviewer's Comments:

APPENDIX B

PARENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Name_____ I.D. No._____

Instructions to Interviewer:

You will notice that most of the items in this schedule are dichotomized into two responses. These responses are coded "I" or "0". Please place the code response number for each item on the line at the right of the item. When no direction is given with an item the responses are "yes" or "no", in which case "yes" = 1 and "no" = 0. If a number is expressly called for indicate the actual response.

		Code	Col.
1.	How many times has the Family Assistant been to your home, or spoken to you at home or in school?	____	____
2.	Do you think your child (children) seem to be getting along better with teachers since you have been working with the Family Assistant?	____	____
3.	Do they (does he/she) seem to be getting along better with other students since you have been working with the Family Assistant?	____	____
4.	Do you think your child (children) are more interested in their school subjects since you have been working with the Family Assistant?	____	____
5.	Does the Family Assistant keep you well informed about how your child (children) are doing in school?	____	____
6.	Do you think the Family Assistant understands what kind of help your child (children) needs?	____	____
7.	Does the Family Assistant let you know when your child has problems at school?	____	____
8.	Open-ended Do you have any suggestions that would make the program better?		

APPENDIX C

ILLUSTRATIVE IN-SERVICE PROGRAM

BOARD OF EDUCATION
CITY OF NEW YORK

BUREAU OF
ATTENDANCE

CONFERENCE: A. Family Assistants of Brooklyn and Queens School-Home Contact Program
B. Family Assistants of Man. and Bx. School-Home Contact Program

DATES: A. January 25, 1972
B. January 26, 1972

PLACES: A. 65 Court Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. Room 824
B. 1200 Zerega Avenue, Bronx, N.Y. (Attendance Bureau)

CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Lillian Weiss
Mr. Edwin Carlson
A. 56 Family Assistants of Brooklyn and Queens
B. 32 Family Assistants of Manhattan and Bronx

MINUTES

Purpose of Training Meeting: To gain an understanding of the causes which lead to failure and ultimately dropping out of school by high school students. To provide the Family Assistants with some examples of good interviewing techniques. To discuss job related problems.

Training Films: The Family Assistants reviewed two motion picture films, entitled 1) "Case History of a Dropout" and 2) "Attendance Problems". The first film treats the subject of students who leave high school before graduation. The film traces the causes which lead youngsters to become dropouts.

Joe's story presents a family in which the father projects a negative male image to his son. He is constantly henpecked and berated by his wife, because he is unsuccessful in holding a steady job. His failure and negative attitudes cast their reflection upon the character development of his son, Joe, who witnesses them. This kind of negative home environment creates many psychological problems for Joe, so that he feels he cannot achieve anything either.

His feelings of insecurity and rejection cause Joe to develop emotional problems in the early grades of grammar school, and are the root cause of his failure to learn to read. Failure in this tool subject causes failure in other subjects. He becomes bored and frustrated in school and ultimately becomes a dropout.

Once in the adult world, Joe is confronted with the problem of gaining employment. Since he is ill-equipped to compete in the job market, he gets only ill-paid menial jobs. He also experiences the ultimate fate of the majority of unskilled laborers - being "laid off." The resulting psychological failure of Joe is indicated unless he is helped to regain his motivation toward learning.

There is then a dialogue between Guidance Counselors concerning programs which are being developed to get dropouts back into school, and the type of counseling necessary to help these youngsters.

Many of the youngsters that return to school receive counseling, and manage to get their high school diplomas. The importance of human motivation as a factor leading to a return to school is emphasized.

CONFERENCES: SCHOOL-HOME CONTACT Jan. 25 and 26, 1972

Discussion of Film: Mrs. Weiss remarked that narcotics addiction is one of today's major causes of students "dropping out." She noted that in 1962 when the film was made this cause wasn't as prevalent as it is today. One Family Assistant also made mention of the SPARK Program in the high schools which is helping students who are narcotics users.

A general discussion ensued. Mrs. Weiss discussed the causes of Joe's truancy and eventual "drop out" from school. Important factors discussed were as follows:

1. Family relationships and conflicts.
2. Role of the father.
3. Need for security and acceptance.
4. Need for a positive identification with a male image.
5. Students' mental attitudes and motivations - feelings of failure and feelings of achievement.
6. Psychological reactions during childhood and their effects upon ego development.
7. The supportive role of school personnel. (Motivation and drive as "helps to success").

The Family Assistants felt that the film helped to clarify some of the root causes which contribute to the development of a dropout. It also helped them understand student symptoms better.

Discussion Concerning the Job: The Family Assistants wanted to know how many visits per day they were required to make. Mrs. Weiss explained to the Family Assistants that the number of visits which they make per day is a flexible thing. From her survey of program related schools she determined that usually from 3 to 6 visits daily were made by Family Assistants. The number of visits depends on the distances to be covered, and the amount of time necessary to make a meaningful visit to various families. The Family Assistants have to use their own skills and judgments in dealing with individual cases, but are still accountable for their time, caseload management and related daily program activities.

In order to supplement information given by the family, the Family Assistants should be in communication with the school referral person, so that better understanding of the student and his problems would result. Background information also may be secured from guidance counselors, cutting coordinators, teachers or other school personnel by Family Assistants before they make their visits.

The Family Assistants were also asked to get adequate information from cutting coordinators when given a referral. Family Assistants should be able to inform parents of the subject class(es) cut and and the period(s) cut.

Role of the Family Assistant: One Family Assistant complained that the role of the Family Assistant is too limiting for her. She felt that she should be responsible for completing the entire interviewing and follow-up process with a family she visited.

Mrs. Weiss again explained the liason aspect of the role of the Family Assistant. The Family Assistant does not substitute for the Social Worker, as she is not trained in this professional competency.

CONFERENCES: SCHOOL-HOME CONTACT Jan 25 and 26, 1972

Some of the guidelines of the Family Assistant's job were again reviewed, emphasizing the differentiation of the roles of various school staff. The theme of cooperative teamwork between the school personnel and Family Assistant was stressed. The Family Assistants report relevant information to the school about living conditions, family attitudes and relationships that affect the lives of students and about which the professional school personnel can do something to help. It is the Family Assistant's job to report back this information to the licensed school-helping person to enable him to make necessary adjustments for the student and the family. School and community resources are utilized in making additional referrals for help. She would feed back this suggestion to the school Coordinators for further follow-up planning.

Training Film, entitled "Attendance Problems": When an Attendance Teacher conducted his interview with a student's mother, he established rapport, discussed possible causes of the student's problem, encouraged ventilation of the client's feelings and motivated and supported the mother toward seeking help. He then discussed the boy's problems and needs with the school Guidance Counselor, who will do further follow-up with the parent and student.

The film was helpful to the Family Assistants because it demonstrated interviewing skills and techniques. The Family Assistants volunteered that the meeting was a stimulating and educational experience. Interest in future training meetings was widely expressed by the Family Assistants.

Submitted by:

Edwin Carlson
Attendance Teacher
School-Home Contact Program

Board of Education
City of New York

Bureau of
Attendance

CONFERENCE: Family Assistants of Manhattan and Bronx - School-Home Contact Program
Family Assistants of Brooklyn and Queens - School-Home Contact Program

DATE: Thursday, December 16, 1971 and Monday, December 13, 1971

TIME: 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 A.M.

PLACE: 65 Court Street, Brooklyn, Room 824 - 1200 Zerega Ave., Bronx, N.Y.

CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Lillian Weiss

PRESENT: Mr. Stanley Berger
Mr. Edwin Carlson
Mrs. Dolan - Frances Lewis
Mrs. Grey - John Bowne
Mr. Strizhak - Jefferson
Mrs. Lillian Weiss
57 Family Assistants of Brooklyn and Queens High Schools
33 Family Assistants of Manhattan and Bronx High Schools

MINUTES

I. Purpose of Meeting: Initial meeting of In-Service Training Sessions for Family Assistants.

A. Introduction: Greeting of welcome. The Attendance Bureau personnel were introduced. The Family Assistants were welcomed as a valued part of the School-Home Contact team. The Family Assistants then introduced themselves to the other members of the group.

B. Orientation Discussion held: Getting to know each other - assurance of a climate in which the Family Assistants can feel free to discuss and share their views and experiences, their needs and their problems, the areas they need and want help, their participation in training session planning.

C. Introduction and Discussion of new forms: (1) Referral and Report form (2) Family Assistant Daily Activity Report (3) Referrals Summary report.

II. Monthly Carfare Reports: The need for carfare reports and the correct method of filling them out was discussed. Ventilation of feelings, suggestions, invited.

A. Clarification of specific problem items was made by Mrs. Weiss.

1. List transfer points as a two-street intersection point.
2. No need to repeat the same address listed in the From column to the

next line's To column for the same day.

3. Family Assistant's signature must be in ink on each of the 3 copies.

MINUTES - CONFERENCE 12/16/71 - Family Assistants of Brooklyn and Queens

4. Some Family Assistants talked about the Board of Education regulation which prohibits charging the program for fares getting to work and back to their home address. Further clarification since has permitted some revision in policy regulations as follows.*

*If the Family Assistant lives within one fare zone to school address, and is starting out from her home to make a 2 fare zone visit to a parent's home, one fare will be reimburseable, starting from transfer point to home address of family. Exact transfer address point must be listed on carfare sheet, as well as client's address. Some members of the group felt that $20 monthly limit was inadequate and the time filling out the monthly report was wasteful.

B. The need for Carfare Reports was explained by Mrs. Weiss and Mr. Berger:

A brief review of the purpose of this State Funded Program and its objectives was given. The need for itemized expenditures is necessitated by New York City and State Department of Education regulations, financial budgetary accountability and program funding limitations.

Problems with individual school Imprest Funds last year led to a needed change in the method of reimbursement of carfare expenses. Responsibility now rests with the Family Assistants to submit properly filled out monthly carfare forms for reimbursement which will be paid promptly by Mrs. Weiss.

One member of the group felt there was already too much paper work connected with the program. Why add the Carfare Report?

Another member suggested that the Family Assistant be paid the lump sum of $20 per month for travel expenses and thus eliminate the use of carfare forms entirely.

Some of the Family Assistants said they took cabs because no buses were available in certain areas. Two or more Family Assistants share the cab fare. How can they be reimbursed under the present system?

Mrs. Weiss recognized that there were some problem areas connected with travel expenses which needed further policy clarification. She would try to find ways of alleviating some of the problems encountered and give a further report of her efforts at the next meeting.

Mr. Berger advised that the Attendance Bureau would like to lay out the necessary monies to each school for carfare expenses, but the law requires accountability for all monies appropriated to various programs.

Some members of the group wanted to know why their own private autos couldn't be used for home visiting work assignments.

Discussion re: reasons followed with group participation, clarifying for Family Assistants the Board of Education policy regarding required insurance coverage for the Board of Education employees. There is no insurance protection for hourly personnel.

MINUTES - CONFERENCE 12/16/71 - Family Assistants of Brooklyn and Queens

C. Mrs. Weiss pointed out that no parent or student should be transported in a Family Assistant's own car to school, clinics, etc. If a real emergency exists for cab transportation a receipted cab fare could be individually approved by Teacher-in-Charge.

D. Family Assistants suggested the issuance of weekly bus or other transportation passes during school hours as used in high schools by high school students. Board of Education present policy does not provide such a practice for field personnel, but Mrs. Weiss will explore the possibility of securing further ruling regarding this potential resource.

E. Some of the Family Assistants suggested that there be official reimbursement for evening telephone calls made by the Family Assistants from their homes. It was agreed that further follow-up will be made by Mrs. Weiss regarding the securing of additional State Funds to cover this needed item.

F. Practical suggestions to avoid excessive fare expenses or excessive traveling time were also discussed. Work schedules should be set up as much as possible or feasible in closer geographical areas, to make for better utilization of Family Assistants' time. However, where there is the necessity for avoiding a delay of a particular home visit and the home is not in the same geographic area as other home visits, it will be necessary to be flexible and accomplish that necessary visit.

One Family Assistant wanted to visit areas near her home to save carfare. (She has been doing this already). Mrs. Weiss said this seemed O.K., but suggested that the school home coordinator has the working knowledge of the priorities of referral assignments and of neighborhood areas and that the school policy should be followed or discussed with School-Home Contact in planning and organizing unusual visiting scheduling.

III. Number of Visits Per Day:

Family Assistants wanted to know how many visits they are required to make each day. Mrs. Weiss explained that visiting families at home entails many considerations - flexibility of planning, grouping arrangements by areas, sending prior notice of visits, resource of activity, travel time, and time spent in the home with the parent. There is no set arbitrary number of visits. The Family Assistant's individual judgment and caseload management,

interviewing skills, parent and student interest and involvement are all important factors in reflecting the number of visits that can be made daily. The Family Assistant is normally expected to work 4½ hours per day, planning how to do this so that maximum effectiveness of time and utilization of contacts will result. Home visits might add up to 3 to 6 visits per day; however, if upon visiting, the Family Assistant finds that a serious problem exists which requires various immediate actions to resolve perhaps only 1 or 2 visits will be made that day (this would be the exceptional case). When the Family Assistant cannot contact the family during normal working hours, evening or Saturday visits should be made, by appointment if possible, provided that they are planned and discussed with School-Home Contact Coordinator before-hand.

MINUTES - CONFERENCE 12/16/71 - Family Assistants of Brooklyn and Queens

A. Practical suggestions were made on how to avoid dangers and potential risks in visiting homes in high crime areas.

(1) Family Assistants visit in pairs when the need exists.
(2) Ask Building Superintendent for assistance in locating family when apartment number is not known.
(3) If suspicious groups are congregating on steps, hallways of building, return another time; if there is a phone, phone the parent from the neighborhood school to meet you downstairs first.
(4) Be constantly alert. Get to know your neighborhood activity areas (good or bad). Contact your available community resources for suggestions, cooperation, etc. The community agencies are valuable contacts to develop and can provide additional practical assistance in many areas.
(5) A note should be left in a sealed envelope under the door and with the next door neighbor, if client is not home, asking client to phone for an appointment (to avoid further useless re-visits).

IV. Identification Cards:

Family Assistants discussed need for an official Board of Education Identification Card. They are having difficulty gaining entry into the homes of their clients, even with the letter of introduction issued by their respective schools. They have also encountered difficulty in cashing their pay checks without an official Board of Education card. They were assured that the Bureau of Attendance is now working on securing this, and will issue the cards as soon as possible.

V. Discussion of Newly Created Forms:-

Mrs. Weiss summarized some of the discussed items during her meeting with School Coordinators on Friday, December 10th. She then introduced the three new forms and distributed samples to all members.

A. The Referral and Report Form was presented and individual items discussed. It was pointed out that each school would make the decision whether to utilize this particular Report form or to continue the use of a similar form. The Referral form is to be initiated by the School-Home Contact Coordinator, the Guidance Counselor, Dean or Attendance Teacher or other school personnel making referrals to the Family Assistant. Its use would be an important guide and tool for the Family Assistant in the interviewing process with the parent and school personnel. Relevant information is to be filled in by the Family Assistant, after the interview. Mrs. Weiss discussed the value of using this form in duplicate. The original report is returned to the person making the referral for followup; the duplicate copy is to be kept in a central file by the School-Home Contact Coordinator. The report is then available at any time if the parent visits the school. Comments made by the Family Assistants were favorable.

MINUTES - CONFERENCE 12/16/71 - Family Assistants of Brooklyn and Queens

1. The main objectives of the School-Home Contact Program were reviewed by Mrs. Weiss. The Family Assistant is to provide a connecting bridge between the family and the school--to bring needed information from the school to the parent and to feed back to the school from the parent pertinent information that will help the Pupil Personnel staff work with the parent and child to plan for the adjustment of the child's or family's problems, either at the in-school level, or by making proper outside agengy referrals.

2. Use of Confidential Material

One Family Assistant raised the question of keeping confidential material given to her by a parent to herself, (this at the request of the parent), so that it is not shared by school personnel. A School Coordinator said that a parent's request for confidentiality should be respected, since it is hoped that eventually the parent will come to the school and share the confidential information with the referral person after the Family Assistant has motivated her accordingly. Mrs. Weiss felt further clarification was needed here. She discussed the need to clarify the Family Assistant's role as an adjunctive service to the school's professional staff. The Family Assistant, though having an important role is not a substitute for the licensed professional guidance counselor or other pupil personnel staff. The Family Assistant is to work with the parent as a representative of the school, as an arm or supplement to the professional. The Family Assistant should work as part of a school team in cooperative teamwork relationship with professional school personnel staff with roles defined. One Family Assistant said she felt that the parents have a greater feeling of identity with Family Assistants since they are part of the same community and they could relate better than the in-school worker. They would speak more freely to her. It was agreed that the positive relationship of the Family Assistant to the parent is important, especially in establishing rapport and motivational attitudes which would help the in-school staff in follow-up planning with the student and parent.

Mrs. Weiss gave the following interpretations:

The Family Assistant must not work in a vacuum. There are various professionals within the school, licensed and qualified to do case-work with the parents once the Family Assistant has reported a need for further help. The Family Assistant should consult with them regularly.

In respecting the parent's request for confidentiality, the Family Assistant would not include such material in her written report. She would, however, discuss the parent's request and problem with the Guidance Counselor, who is the professional helping person. The decision as to the method of handling the confidential material would rest with the Guidance Counselor.

MINUTES - CONFERENCE 12/16/71 - Family Assistants of Brooklyn and Queens

Mr. Berger stated that any person in the helping field could have his hands tied by the "binds" of confidentiality expressed by a parent. Therefore, the Family Assistant must be careful not to be entrapped by such a promise without knowing what such a commitment might mean to the parent and/or to the school. A commitment to a position of confidentiality, without discussing with the parent what this means, may involve a problem that the parent and/or the Family Assistant will need to solicit help for and which the Family Assistant is not qualified to give alone. He may thus gain the parent's respect and permission to seek the expertise and resources of other helping persons.

B. Family Assistant Daily Activity Report

1. To be filled out by Family Assistant daily and given to School-Home Contact Coordinator.

2. Will aid in making out carfare forms.

3. Telephone to make appointments with school personnel for the families visited that need help. Key at bottom of page to record visits to various school personnel.

4. Give overall view of Family Assistant's activity.

5. Totals - Helpful for evaluators and auditors because they will provide statistical information on which the future termination

or recycling of program will depend. Some Family Assistants prefer to have an ongoing record of their visits to various families in a notebook so they can refer to it if a case is to be revisited.

C. School-Home Contact Referrals Summary:

This form is a good supervisory tool to get the overall picture of what has been accomplished by the program workers. This is kept by the School Home Coordinator on a weekly basis.

The meeting was stimulating, with a great deal of participation from the Family Assistant Staff. Many of the Family Assistants, after the meeting, expressed their appreciation of such meetings and of having the opportunity to bring out problems which they encountered in the course of the job. Mrs. Weiss advised that the next meeting would cover parent and Family Assistant relationships in interviewing, and in addition, a film will be shown.

Submitted by,

Edwin Carlson
Attendance Teacher

APPENDIX D

ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIALS: PARENTS COUNCIL

BOARD OF EDUCATION

THE CITY OF NEW ORK

BUREAU OF ATTENDANCE

65 COURT STREET

BROOKLYN, N.Y. 11201

March 8, 1972

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT: MEETING FOR SCHOOL HOME CONTACT COORDINATORS

RE: ESTABLISHING A SCHOOL HOME CONTACT PROGRAM PARENT COUNCIL

Dear

One of the criteria for the successful implementation of the School Home Contact Program is the provision that there be adequate parent involvement with the program and its objectives.

The New York State Education Department approved a proposal of this School Home Contact Program and recommended that meetings of parents and school personnel be held periodically so that parents will be apprised of the goals and progress of the project. Parents can be helpful by sharing their information and experiences with us, by helping us examine the program's progress, by helping to develop modifications and by making recommendations as to the future needs of the program so that our students and their parents can best be served.

We are, therefore, planning a meeting of all Home School Contact Coordinators to discuss methods of organizing a Parent Council for the program. The Council should consist of at least 50% membership of involved parents; the rest will be school personnel, namely, guidance counselors, program coordinators, family assistants, and the attendance teacher in charge of the program and parent association members.

Cooperative teamwork is called for in order that this phase of our program objectives be met.

The meeting of the School Home Contact Coordinators is scheduled for Thursday, March 16, 1972 at 65 Court Street, Room 824 at 1:00 P.M. Please arrange to be there as I need your help in order to initiate an effective ongoing parent council organization.

Will you therefore discuss the proposal with your School Home Contact staff and elicit the names of parents and school staff who are interested enough to serve as members of the parent council. Family Assistants who have developed good relationships with parents can be utilized greatly to suggest and contact their parents.

I wish to offer my appreciation of your past interest and dedication and look forward to your continued cooperation in our common goals in servicing the children of the School Home Contact Program.

Sincerely yours,

(Mrs.) Lillian Weiss
Attendance Teacher In Charge

APPENDIX E

CHANGES IN EVALUATION PROCEDURE

APPENDIX E

Changes in Evaluation Procedure

Initially three of the six evaluation objectives called for judging the program a success when significant proportions of those included in the family assistant caseload were reduced in absenteeism, tardiness and dropout status and increased their academic achievement levels from the 1970-71 to the 1971-72 school years, at a 90% or higher confidence level.

In order to make such an assessment of differences in proportions statistical tests available require independent samples. That is, the two samples cannot be on the same subjects. Since, practically all students referred to the family assistants were, according to school records, serviced by the family assistant program, and since it was determined that in each school the students records were thoroughly screened and nearly all students for whom the program was designed were referred to the program,it was impossible to have a comparable control group. This meant that other alternatives for assessment than those initially proposed had to be employed. Shifting evaluation criteria from differences in proportions to differences in means was considered. Unfortunately the distribution during the 1970-71 school year was extremely skewed and therefore statistical tests for differences in means would be unappropriate since they assume normal distributions. For this reason and because group means tend to mask important individual attainments it was decided to attempt to stay with proportions.

Since a comparable control group was not available it was decided to use as a basis for inference a norm group sample drawn from students who did not exhibit the excessive records of absenteeisms, tardiness or low achievement, i.e., those not referred to family assistants. Such a norm group it was assumed would provide an "ideal" criteria against which to assess changes. This method would allow for comparing patterns of proportions who changed between students on the family assistant caseload and those without histories of school problems. This alternative method of assessment was approved by the Bureau of Research for the 1970-71 school year and was again followed this year. While this method allows for inferred conclusions about the impact of the program a more powerful or definitive assessment could be made if a comparable control group were available. However, while our conclusions must be qualified as tentative because adequate control subjects were not available, we do not suggest the creation of a control group in future evaluation studies. We believe school officials behaved quite ethically in providing family assistants for all those eligible even though it make definitive evaluation more difficult.